

## DELAWARE DRUG-RELATED DEATHS

 **345**  
deaths in 2017\* **6<sup>TH</sup> HIGHEST**  
overdose death rate in the nation\*\* **HIGHER**  
than the national rate

If you suspect or know that a family is dealing with substance misuse, your primary responsibilities as an educator are to:

1. **Assess the situation** - Is anyone in immediate danger? Follow your center's policies and procedures and call local law enforcement when necessary.
2. **Provide families with resources** - Go to <https://www.helpsherede.com> for detox, outpatient, inpatient and education programs in Delaware.

## Substance Misuse Concerns

- **Substance Misuse:** Using any substance in a manner that can cause harm to users or to those around them.
- **Substance Use Disorder:** A medical illness caused by repeated misuse of a substance that impairs health and function.
- **Addiction:** Severe and chronic substance use disorder.

### Did you know?

Families in crisis are more likely to accept information and assistance from individuals whom they already know and trust, such as early childhood educators.

There is Hope



#### Prevention Works

Strong family and social connections, emotional health and feelings of control help people avoid substance misuse. Prevention programs are available in schools, health care settings and more.



#### Treatment is Effective

Behavioral therapies and medications are available to effectively treat substance use disorders.



#### People Recover

Many people have successfully changed their lives and maintained remission from substance use disorders. Recovery supports, coaches and peer services can help.

**HELP**  
*is here.*  
PREVENT • TREAT • RECOVER

Refer families to:

(800) 652-2929 (New Castle County),

(800) 345-6785 (Kent and Sussex counties), or

<https://www.helpsherede.com>

for information on detox, and treatment resources, and more.

# Substance Use and Children

No amount of alcohol, marijuana, or other illegal drugs is safe for children, even in pregnancy. Babies exposed to these substances may experience effects long after birth.

## OPIOIDS: LEGAL AND ILLEGAL

### what families need to know

Opioids are highly addictive. In babies, opioids can cause life-threatening illness and withdrawal symptoms known as neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). Symptoms of NAS include excessive crying, irritability, seizures, gastrointestinal problems, and more. The long-term impacts of opioid use during pregnancy are still unknown, but there is evidence to suggest children exposed to opioids in utero face long-term behavioral and cognitive effects.



## ALCOHOL

### what families need to know

Alcohol is the number one cause of preventable birth defects. If a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, the alcohol reaches the baby through the placenta. Alcohol is significantly more toxic to a baby because a baby's liver cannot break down alcohol. Alcohol can damage a baby's organs as well as cause physical, emotional and behavioral problems, difficulties in learning or memory, and higher rates of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).



## COCAINE AND METHAMPHETAMINE (STIMULANTS)

### what families need to know

Babies born to mothers who use cocaine during pregnancy may have low birth weight and small head circumference, and may be shorter than babies born to mothers who do not use cocaine. They may also show symptoms of irritability, hyperactivity, tremors, high-pitched crying and excessive sucking at birth.



## MARIJUANA

### what families need to know

Marijuana use should not be viewed as a "safe" alternative to other drugs. Contrary to reports, marijuana can be addictive. There is research to suggest that marijuana use during pregnancy causes impaired neurodevelopment in fetuses as well as low birth weight and problems in behavior and cognition in childhood.



## Summary of Substance Effects

	Nicotine	Alcohol	Marijuana	Opioids	Cocaine	Methamphetamine
<b>Short-term Effects/Birth Outcome</b>						
Fetal Growth	Effect	Strong Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect
Anomalies	?	Strong Effect	?	No Effect	No Effect	?
Withdrawal	No Effect	Effect	Effect	Strong Effect	No Effect	Effect
Neurobehavior	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect

### Long-term Effects/Birth Outcome

Growth	?	Strong Effect	No Effect	No Effect	?	*
Behavior	Effect	Strong Effect	Effect	Effect	Effect	*
Cognition	Effect	Strong Effect	Effect	?	Effect	Effect
Language	Effect	Effect	No Effect	Effect	Effect	*
Achievement	Effect	Strong Effect	Effect	*	?	*

? No Consensus on Effect    \* Limited or no data available

Updated by the Delaware Division of Public Health in 2017. Original source: Behnke, M. & Smith, V. C. (2013). Technical Report. Prenatal effects on the exposed fetus.

American Academy of Pediatrics, 131(3), e1009- e1024.

